

Pray every day

(I'll Teach You How)

by Fr. John Kerns

Everyone will probably agree that it is important to pray every day. But I will bet that most Catholics don't make time – every day – for prayer. I think that because there were times in my life – even after I was ordained – where I would allow myself to get so busy with ministerial activity that I would let days go by and never (other than the Mass) make the time for that one-to-one connection with God. Furthermore, if a lot of Catholics admitted it, they would probably say that they aren't sure how to spend the time, if they ever did make the time for prayer. Well, this is your lucky day! I'm going to teach you what to do.

Matthew Kelly, in his book *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic* (2012) writes that Catholics who are very engaged in their faith are committed to the combination of these four things on a consistent basis: daily prayer, regular study of the Catholic faith, generosity with their time and money, and, finally, evangelization. Here I will just review how to build a strong personal prayer life.

Those who pray daily have learned that it is important to have a routine time for prayer, like going to morning Mass, praying in a big easy chair first thing in the morning, praying at night before going to sleep, or praying the rosary on the way to work. It is a regular part of their day, like breakfast, checking email, exercise, or things like that. It is a routine that, if it is skipped, then the day doesn't go right. Do NOT expect daily prayer to happen spontaneously. It takes resolve. Therefore it is important to decide what your routine will be. I find that for me, the first thing in the morning is the best time, because once the day starts, anything can disrupt that goal.

Secondly, decide where are you going to pray? In a chair next to a crucifix, or an image of Mary? In a quiet room, a church or chapel? In the corner of one's bedroom right after getting up, making the bed and getting dressed? The first room I set up after moving into the rectory (the parish house) was to create a chapel. That is where I spend time in private prayer.

Once you establish a routine – a time and a place for daily prayer – it is time to develop what Matthew Kelly calls “the routine within the routine”. People who are daily pray-ers do the same thing fairly consistently each day. It may have taken years to get to its current form,

but they follow a pattern. Some pray the rosary, or go through a list of people for whom they pray daily. My mom had a litany of children, grandchildren and specific needs that she recited from memory. I pray the Divine Office, but also have a long list of people I pray for, including the needs of this parish. So if you don't

have your “routine within the routine” let me share what Matthew Kelly suggests. His suggestions contain elements from a variety of Catholic spiritual traditions.

So first: set a time of day to pray when you know it will be consistent and will not be disrupted. Start with only 10 minutes a day and add to that later, if you want to.

Here is what you do with that time, your “routine within the routine”. Matthew Kelly suggests seven (7) steps.

1. **Gratitude:** Begin by thanking God in a personal dialogue for whatever you are most grateful for today.
2. **Awareness:** Revisit the times of the past twenty-four hours when you were and were not the-best-version-of-yourself*. Talk to God about these situations and what you learned from them.
3. **Significant Moments:** Identify something you experienced today and explore what God might be trying to say to you through that event (or person).
4. **Peace:** Ask God to forgive you for any wrong you have committed (against yourself, another person, or Him) and to fill you with a deep and abiding peace.
5. **Freedom:** Speak with God about how he is inviting you to change your life, so that you can experience the freedom to be the-best-version-of-yourself.
6. **Others:** Lift up to God anyone you feel called to pray for today, asking God to bless and guide them.
7. Finish by praying the **Our Father**.

There are few things that can be guaranteed. But I guarantee that if you follow this basic plan every day your life will be changed for the better.

This is your pastor speaking: Pray every day.

* “The best-version-of-yourself” is a description coined by Matthew Kelly to describe becoming the best version of who God made you to be. God has a different plan for each person. In essence, to seek holiness is for each of us, collectively, to follow God's plan for us with our unique qualities and personality.

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